तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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Vamsidas Babaji Maharaja

His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

If you think this is a brass-made idol, then it will remain a brass-made idol to you forever. But if you elevate yourself to a higher platform of Krishna consciousness, then Krishna, this Krishna, will talk with you. There is a Vamsidas Babaji Maharaja. He was talking with his deity. And Madana-mohana, He was talking with Sanatan Goswami.

— Installation of Sri Sri Rukmini Dwarkanath. Los Angeles. 16 July 1969.

You have heard the name of Vamsidas Babaji? Sometimes, when his things were stolen, his disciples would cry, "It is stolen!" So he said, "Why you are bothering? One thief [Krishna] gives, and another thief [Krishna] takes. That's all. Who gave the money, he is thief. And who has taken away, he is also thief. So why you are bothering? One thief gives; another thief takes." ❀

— Morning walk conversation, 13 March 1976, Mayapur.

Vamsidas Babaji and Srila Saraswati Thakur

Excerpts from the Book
Vamsidas Babaji

By Sri Srimad Bhakti Vikas Swami

Despite his wild appearance, Srila Vamsidas Babaji Maharaja is a bona fide Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava saint. He was accepted as such by Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. All the calendars published annually by the Gaudiya Maṭha and its branches and sub-branches record his disappearance day, as does the calendar produced by ISKCON. (p. i)

* * *

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur came to hear of the exalted position of Vamsidas Babaji. In 1903, they first had his *darśana* in Nabadwip. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur used to say that Srila Jagannath Das Babaji, Srila Gaura Kishore Das Babaji, and Srila Vamsidas Babaji were all close associates and are always worthy of worship by devotees. (p. 4)

* * *

After eating, Vamsidas would call the devotees and give out the remnants of his food. But those companions never personally ate the remnants. They carefully wrapped Vamsidas' remnants and sent them to Vrindavan and Mayapur. The Gaudiya Mission gave three men to travel with Vamsidas, mainly for the purpose of getting his remnants. After packaging his remnants (cooked rice, vegetables, etc.), one man took them to Mayapur. All the devotees in Mayapur eagerly awaited Vamsidas' remnants. Some of Vamsidas' remnants were sent to the Radha-Raman Ghera Goswamis in Vrindavan. The Goswamis eagerly took Vamsidas' remnants — never mind that it had "spoiled." While Vamsidas was staying at Nabadwip, someone would always stay near him just to get his *prasāda* and

next column ☞

bring it to the other devotees. This was Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur's instruction. (p. 24-25)

* * *

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur arranged that firewood and provisions for cooking be sent daily to Vamsidas from the Sri Chaitanya Math in Mayapur. Every day devotees would go by bicycle, crossing the Jalangi by boat. Different devotees would go on different days. Sometimes the Baba would welcome them. Sometimes he would accept the gifts without saying a word. Sometimes he would just sit and stare. Sometimes he would take the gifts and angrily throw them in the river, or shout at them, "Who are you? Do you think you are bringing things for me? My Prabhu will send!" Some devotees, not able to appreciate Babaji Maharaja's transcendental mood, started to speak badly of him. When Saraswati Thakur came to hear of this, he called those *brahmacārīs* and chastised them, warning them that they did not understand the exalted position of Vamsidas. At that time, he forbade his disciples to go and see Babaji Maharaja. However, he told Dola Govinda Brahmachari (the temple commander of the *math* and later well-known throughout Orissa as Dola Govinda Shastri) that without telling the other *brahmacārīs* he should continue bringing things to Vamsidas. Saraswati Thakur told him to leave the things at a little distance from Babaji Maharaja's *kuṭīra* and to go away with out speaking to him. Dola Govinda continued this service for several months. (p. 71-72)

* * *

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur and Vamsidas Babaji had great respect for each other. Vamsidas would refer to Saraswati Thakur as Jagannather Bimala, because when he was younger his name was Bimala Prasada, which means the son born as the mercy of Bimala Devi, the deity of Durga in the Jagannath temple at Puri. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur sometimes visited Vamsidas at his *kuṭīra* in Nabadwip town. Seeing him coming, Vamsidas would exclaim, "Oh, a *mañjarī* has come. So won't Radha come also? She will come! She will come!" He was referring to Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati as being a *mañjarī* (one of the young girl assistants of the *gopī* friends of Srimati Radharani). When visiting Vamsidas, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta warned his disciples to sit silently and not make any offense, lest they misunderstand his wild appearance and eccentric behavior. (p. 73)

— *Vaṁsīdāsa Bābājī*. Published by Bhakti Vikasa Swami. 1994.

Preaching, Sannyasa and Institutions

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

When the *ācārya* disappears, a dark period comes, just as a patch of black cloud covers up the effulgent sun. It is an unfortunate time, but it is temporary. That cloud will go away. A violent storm may come and disperse the cloud, and then the effulgent sun will come out. If you trace out history, you will find that after the disappearance of an *ācārya*, this period comes. That period came after the disappearance of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. Then his disciple Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami appeared like the effulgent sun. After his disappearance, a dark period has come. The sun is there. It is only covered by a temporary black cloud. It will be dispersed, and then the effulgent sun will come.

Mahaprabhu was doing *ācārya-līlā* — preaching. After the disappearance of Mahaprabhu, the Goswamis came. They were not preachers. They were *bhajanānandīs*. They just stayed in the jungle of Vrindavan and wrote books. They were ordered to do four things: a) Write *bhakti śāstras*, scriptures speaking the science of *bhakti;* b) Excavate the lost *tīrthas* such as Shyamakund and Radha-kund; c) Install deities, construct temples for the deities, and teach the process of deity worship; and d) Teach *vaiṣṇava* etiquette — Sanatan Goswami wrote *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, wherein he quotes many *śāstras* describing *vaiṣṇava* etiquette.

They were doing these four things. They were not preaching, but they were preparing the preachers. Scriptures are needed for that. Otherwise, what will a preacher speak? We quote authority from *śāstra*. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*madhya* 22.65), Chaitanya Mahaprabhu spoke the definition of *uttama-adhikārī* to Sanatan Goswami:

> *śāstra-yuktye sunipuṇa, dṛḍha-śraddhā yāṅra*
> *'uttama-adhikārī' sei tāraye saṁsāra*

Śāstra-yuktye sunipuṇa — He is very proficient in presenting *śāstric* conclusions, *siddhāntas*. By presenting them strongly, he defeats bogus philosophies and establishes pure *bhakti-siddhānta*. He is very strong in *tattva*. He is *dṛḍha-śraddhā* — he has unshakable, strong faith. Such a

person is an *uttama-adhikārī*. Only such an *adhikārī vaiṣṇava* can deliver the whole world — *tāraye saṁsāra*.

The Six Goswamis were preparing preachers. Jiva Goswami sent his three students, Shyamananda Thakur, Narottam Das Thakur, and Srinivas Acharya with books and told them, "Go and preach!" These three elevated *vaiṣṇavas* went to preach. Shyamananda Thakur came to Orissa. Narottam Das Thakur went to the eastern side, to Manipur and Assam, etc. And Srinivas Acharya preached in Bengal. They are the first preachers who came after the disappearance of Mahaprabhu.

Then came Bhaktivinode Thakur. Gaura Kishor Das Babaji and Jagannath Das Babaji were not preachers. They were *bhajanānandīs*. Only Bhaktivinode Thakur came out, that is *ācārya*. After Bhaktivinode Thakur came, then successively Bhaktivinode's son Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur came, and then Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

Bhaktisiddhanta had many *sannyāsī* disciples. Also, Mahaprabhu had predicted,

> *pṛthivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma*
> *sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma*
>
> My name and teachings will be spread to all corners of the world.

Still, after the disappearance of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta a black period was there.

So who fulfilled Mahaprabhu's prediction? Bhaktivinode Thakur started. Because India was blindly following the West, he thought that the books and teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu should be presented in English, and that this science should be taught in the Western world. He was very disappointed that although this *saṁskṛti*, culture, is here in India, Indians are blindly following Western civilization, dog civilization. Bhaktivinode Thakur is *mahājana, ācārya.* He had the transcendental vision that Mahaprabhu's teachings should be presented to the Western world in English, and then, when the Western people would accept it, the Indians' eyes would be opened.

Bhaktivinode Thakur also predicted that a very powerful son would be born who would fulfill this desire, who would preach and spread Mahaprabhu's teachings in the West and throughout the world. His son, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, was born. He was a very powerful *vaiṣṇava*. From his very birth he was a *brahmacārī,* and he was very strong, very powerful. He did not go to the West, but he prepared some of his *sannyāsī* disciples to go and preach. He sent Bhaktipradip Tirtha and Bon Maharaja, but they could not achieve success.

My *guru-mahārāja,* Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, was just a *gṛhastha*. He was not a *sannyāsī*. He was not living in the *āśrama*. He had always been a *gṛhastha*. But he got the real mercy of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, Thakur Bhaktivinode, and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He was empowered, because he was a true follower. He did not twist the teachings. He did not add any deliberation to them. He followed them "as it is". Then he preached in English throughout the world. In their first meeting, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta told him to preach in the West. He could understand, "The person has now come to me who can do it."

Our Srila Prabhupada was a young man at that time. After the disappearance of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, all of his *sannyāsī* disciples fought with each other. There was a case before the Supreme Court. They were quarreling like dogs for a piece of bone.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta had set up sixty-four temples. In the court case they were all divided. This *maṭha* went to this person, and this *maṭha* went to another. So many, many divisions. It was a black period. There was no strong *ācārya*. And now, after the disappearance of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, a similar period has come. Quarreling and fighting is also going on now in Prabhupada's society. So many have lost faith and left. Some of them became karmis and are doing other business. So many of the gurus, the pillars of the society, fell down! Again, this is a dark period. In any case, Mahaprabhu's movement will never be lost. The day will come when the black patch of clouds will be dispersed and the effulgent sun will come out. Prabhupada has said the day will come when the *ācārya* will appear.

Devotee: How have previous *ācāryas* been recognized by the *vaiṣṇavas*?

Gour Govinda Swami: By their potency, their effulgence, and their proficiency. How they present facts. They have been recognized by their clarity, their quoting of authority, defeating bogus philosophies, establishing pure *siddhānta*, and attracting many people, making many persons *vaiṣṇavas*. That is the proof. Krishna is all attractive. It is said that in the material world Krishna attracts the *jīvas* in

two forms: In the form of His holy name and in form of *ācārya* — *nāma-rupe, ācārya-rupe*.

Devotee: Today, it seems like ISKCON is focused more on following an institutional path than it is in recognizing and following the *vaiṣṇava-sādhus*. For example, guruship is decided by the GBC. Also, it seems like many are attracted to take *sannyāsa* just to get some power.

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes. What to do? It is a matter of time, place and circumstance. "Please, give me position." Better to give it to him. Don't let him feel disappointed or depressed. This is a large worldwide organization, and somehow we have to keep it up. Two aspects are there, two facets, two sides, and one of them is the organizational consideration. It is a different consideration, how to keep up the organization. We should not allow the organization to be split up, broken into pieces. In order to keep up the institution, the GBC is doing these kinds of things."

Devotee: When there are failures in this organization, and we see gurus falling down, it gives a bad name to . . .

Gour Govinda Swami: You should understand this thing. The society gives opportunity. If one has been given a position in the society, and he is really intelligent, he will understand, "I don't deserve it; I have no qualification. But still this opportunity has come to me. So I must make myself qualified, then I can stay in the position. Otherwise I will lose it."

For the sake of maintaining the institution, opportunity is given. Unity must be there. We should not allow it to be split up. This is an organizational matter. Why should a member feel discouraged that he cannot get an opportunity?

Srila Prabhupada did the same thing. Prabhupada knew these people were not qualified. But he gave them *sannyāsa*. Prabhupada said, "Take this opportunity! Do it now!" Otherwise, how could he manage the society? He would give someone *sannyāsa,* and then put that *sannyāsī* in one area to manage. In this way, the *brahmacārīs* and devotees will obey him, because he is a *sannyāsī*.

Mahaprabhu took *sannyāsa* for this same reason. He was Mahaprabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But because He was a *grhastha*, many were not accepting him and were criticizing. Mahaprabhu thought, "I have to take *sannyāsa,* because a *sannyāsī* has prestige." The general people have the notion that a *māyāvādī sannyāsī* is Narayan. Mahaprabhu thought, "I must take *sannyāsa*, otherwise these people won't listen to Me." So He took up *sannyāsa* from Keshava Bharati, who was a *sannyāsī* in the *māyāvādī sampradāya*. However, Mahaprabhu preached *vaiṣṇava* philosophy. That was His purpose.

Similarly, Srila Prabhupada gave *sannyāsa*. Otherwise, how can you manage such a worldwide organization? All of the *brahmacārīs* and devotees will accept if a *sannyāsī* is the leader. They will offer him obeisances and accept what he says. But if he is a *gṛhastha*, if he is a *brahmacārī,* nobody will accept.

Prabhupada gave an opportunity. If you are intelligent, you will understand this. You should think, "I don't deserve it. I am not qualified. But he gave me an opportunity so I must make myself qualified and keep up the position." But instead of being intelligent, you are a fool. You are thinking, "Now I am a *sannyāsī!* Now I am great! Now I am guru, now I am *ācārya!*" You have developed pride. You commit *aparādha* and fall down. This is the reason for these fall downs. So, when we think of organizational matters we should consider all of these things. Otherwise how we will maintain the worldwide organization? These two aspects are there, the spiritual aspect and the organizational aspect. This is the organizational aspect.

— From an evening *darśana* in Bhubaneswar on 31 March 1992.

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